

## Background for Designing a Richard & Annette Bloch Cancer Survivors Park

On March 29, 1978 I was diagnosed with "terminal lung cancer", given 90 days to live and told there was no hope. Five days later, another doctor in another city told me, "Dick, you're a very sick boy. We're going to make you a lot sicker, but we are going to cure you. We are going to cure you so that you can work for cancer." Since my cure, my wife and I have been devoting our lives to help the next person with cancer have the best chance of beating it.

We believe that the second greatest correctable cause of cancer mortality (smoking being #1) is relating death and cancer. Many have been brought up to believe that a diagnosis of cancer means automatic death. Some believe that treatments are worse than death. When they are diagnosed, they give up and do not try to fight.

This brought us to the idea of a Cancer Survivors Park. It would not only encourage current patients to have the will to fight, but would subconsciously give healthy people, who know they will never get cancer, the will to fight when they are subsequently diagnosed. Normally parks memorialize the dead. We wanted to do something as a tribute to the living. A Park would be there daily - continuously - to give the same message, "Don't equate death and cancer". Each person who passes would be subconsciously reminded. The sign visibility is undoubtedly the most important single factor. Further, a patient could stroll through the park and gain strength from its various components.

Three fundamental elements were perceived. First is a sculpture as a **focal point**. Created by the renowned Mexican sculptor, Victor Salmones, it is eight life-size figures passing through a maze depicting cancer treatments and success. **It is placed in the most visible point in the park** for passers-by because it needs no explanation. People can walk among the figures, touch them, walk through the maze and generally visualize themselves being helped. It is moving.

The second element in the park is a "Positive Mental Attitude Walk". This is an area that a person can stroll through, meditate and read some 14 plaques; 4 are inspirational and 10 are specific suggestions on fighting cancer.

The third factor is a "Road to Recovery" with seven plaques explaining what cancer is and basic actions to successfully overcome the disease.

Other than these three components, each park is totally unique, being designed to complement the local environment. **It wants to make a magnificent showing to the passer-by**. 97% of the American population does not have cancer, knows they will never get it, has no interest in the park because cancer only happens to the other guy. However, 40% of the people will be diagnosed with cancer in their lifetime. By passing daily and **seeing the beautiful structures and the sign, "Cancer Survivors Park"**, individuals will realize when diagnosed that there is a possibility of surviving and hopefully will try to fight rather than give up. Only 3% of the population has cancer and will be interested

in spending time in the park. Therefore, **the impression to the casual passer-by is far more important than the interior finish.**

In Kansas City, the main focal point is a massive arch of triumph. In Omaha, it is 14 stainless columns representing a tower of light. In Houston it is beautifully carved stone work covered in wrought iron, the dome of which has 2,000 lights. New Orleans has 14 architecturally different columns with a French style arch and a fountain. Columbus is a massive rotunda with balconies overlooking the river. Cleveland is a tall obelisk of carved brick. Chicago, on Lake Shore Drive, has two giant granite columns. Rancho Mirage has a waterfall and a pyramid symbolizing strength.

Landscaping, flowers, water, etc. are all extremely important. We must have an area that looks beautiful 365 days a year. We love color in the seasons where color is possible, but we would not want color to be the focal point if it was not possible 12 months a year.

This Park (or because it is in a park might be called a "Cancer Survivors Plaza") presents a rare opportunity. It is a project that everyone is in favor of! No one opposes it. Everyone wants to help. It is possible to get much donated or provided at reduced prices. The computer, programming and maintenance were donated by Apple in Kansas City and Omaha. (A satisfactory computer with screen and built-in speakers can be bought for \$500.) We understand the planting was donated by the florists in Columbus. While we want no fund raising, we have no problem recognizing anyone who wants to contribute in kind to the park. We are not trying to save ourselves money. What we give is predetermined. We are trying to get the most magnificent park for the people of your area as is possible. **The goal is to come up with a design that looks like it cost two million dollars to build.** Something the City will be very proud of! Rancho Mirage accomplished all goals through the generosity of some 45 craftsmen who were recognized by newspaper ads and a plaque in the park. The architect, builder and landscape designer totally donated their services.

The underlining was added as a result of a recent judging. The above (without underlining) was distributed in advance of a design competition. Ten entries were submitted. Each entrant obviously spent a great deal of time and effort. Seven of the ten designs were promptly eliminated because they were not readily noticeable to passing traffic or looked like improvements that could have been constructed for probably one hundred thousand dollars. Please, for your own benefit, submit original and creative ideas guided by the goals set forth above. Back to the Cancer Survivor Park Index

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